AL 1. 1231

NATURAL AREAS NEWSLETTER

Issue Number 7

July, 1989

Naturally Yours

The Natural Areas Program is sponsored by Alberta Forestry, Lands and Wildlife

NATURALLY YOURS

We are pleased to introduce into the Volunteer Steward Program a new visual identity exclusive to Natural Areas, called "Naturally Yours".

Produced by Edmonton graphic designer, Doug Madill, the identity is designed around Alberta's blue heron and consists of vibrant, natural colors.

The color combination shown contrasts the blues of sky and water with the greens of our forests and grasslands.

Cattails shown in the foreground represent marshlands and sensitive areas of the province. Trees in the background show the diversity of Alberta's lands.

The triangle design was chosen to represent not only Alberta's mountains and trees, but to also show an upward thrust and the positive nature of the program.

SITE UPDATES

Current Issues:

Pine Sands Natural Area -- Some members of the Poacher's Landing Recreation Club, volunteer stewards for the Pine Sands Natural Area, are very concerned with the proposed infrastructure requirements for the recently announced Alberta Pacific pulp mill (northeast of the town of Athabasca). The mill will be located about 0.8 km (0.5 mi.)south of the Natural Area. A road and bridge approach and a water intake line, access road and power line have been proposed to cross the Natural Area. Some members of the club have met with staff of the Natural and Protected Areas Section to discuss their concerns. These issues and concerns are being addressed through the environmental review process.

Wagner Natural Area -- An environmental impact assessment (EIA) is being initiated to deal with the proposed road development. A newsletter will be produced, as part of the public consultation, to keep people informed of its progress. If you would like to receive a copy of the newsletter, please contact: *Mr. Gary Willson, c/o UMA Group Ltd., 17007 - 107 Avenue, Edmonton, Alberta T5S 1G3 [telephone: (403) 483-7722].*

Recent Wildlife Sightings:

The **Columbian ground squirrel** (Spermophilus columbianus) was recently identified as the resident ground squirrel at Saskatoon Mountain Candidate Natural Area, 30 km

(Continued on Page 4 - Ground Squirrel)

RARE PLANTS PROTECTED BY CONSERVANCY LEASE

by Mike McNaughton, Red Deer River Naturalists

An area owned by a Lacombe district farmer has been found to contain an extensive number of orchids, as well as the rare, slender-leaved sundew. The area is boggy with open wet meadows surrounded by tamarack and black spruce. It has three natural springs that allow it to remain moist throughout the year. It is on this area that the Red Deer River Naturalists negotiated a conservancy lease.

Because I was raised in the Lacombe region, I am familiar with the landowner and his property. I have an interest in photography and for several years have been going into this area looking for different types of wildflowers. As I spent more time there, I began to discover orchids, in particular the yellow lady's-slipper, since this species is so conspicuous. My interest was aroused and after reading about orchids, I knew this land had the potential to contain more orchids.

(Continued on Page 4 - Conservancy Lease)

UPCOMING EVENTS

CCEA Conference

August 11, 12 and 13 - University of Alberta, Edmonton

Plan on attending the national Eighth Annual Meeting/Workshop of the Canadian Council on Ecological Areas. This three-day event will consist of concurrent workshops and plenary sessions dealing with management/research issues, public and scientific involvement and challenges of the future. A western barbeque, field trip and a regional prairie provinces' session will be other meeting highlights.

For further information, contact *Brian Braidwood* at (403) 427-8758 (Canadian Council on Ecological Areas Meeting, 6th Floor, Standard Life Centre, 10405 Jasper Avenue, Edmonton, Alberta T5J 3N4).

Soil and Water Conservation Society

July 30-August 2, 1989 - Convention Centre, Edmonton

The theme of this conference, "Making Conservation Happen Together", will focus on coordinated and sustainable resource development. Concurrent sessions include the following conservation programs: A Comparison and Evaluation; Watershed Management: Meeting Many Needs; plus sessions on water quality and erosion.

A plenary session on August 1, 1989, will discuss a Prescription for Developing a Conservation Ethic.

EDITOR'S MESSAGE

Several calls from newly enlisted volunteer stewards prompted the inclusion in this edition of the article "Now That I am a Steward What do I do?". It is primarily targeted for new stewards who have not yet inspected their site(s). Other stewards may also find it informative for completing the inspection forms.

The inspection form has been re-designed to make it more comprehensive, yet hopefully easier to complete. Completed inspection forms were used to help design this new form. The new forms will be forwarded to each volunteer steward in the next few weeks. Additional items in the package will include a map scale ruler for measuring distances on maps and a grease pencil for writing on air photos.

As illustrated on Insert B, attractive "Take a Walk on the Wild Side" badges will be forwarded to each steward on submission of completed inspection reports.

Sandra Myers

Sandra Myers
Volunteer Steward Co-ordinator

PLANTS ARE WILDLIFE, TOO

Alberta Native Plant Council (ANPC) hosted its second successful annual workshop/meeting on April 22, 1989, at Olds College in Olds.

As well as slide shows on Alberta's native plant species and natural habitats, the day was filled with informative presentations. Updates were given on international, national and provincial developments. The chairmen of the council's three committees (i.e., Conservation; Information and Education; and Rare Plants) presented committee updates and announced future activities, including fascinating summer field trips, plans for production of beautiful posters, and recommendations for new species for special protection.

The afternoon dealt with three topics: Raising the Profile and Awareness of Native Plant Species, Reducing the Impact, and Saving the Pieces. These sessions included case studies and information on reclamation and botanic gardens.

If you wish to join this worthwhile organization, contact the Alberta Native Plant Council, Box 4524, Station SE, Edmonton, Alberta T6E 5G4. (Annual individual membership costs $15.)

"FLOWING TO THE FUTURE" CONFERENCE

The first of what is hoped to be a biennial conference to discuss Alberta's rivers was held May 11-13, 1989, at the University of Calgary. The theme of the conference - "A River is More Than Just Water" - was timely since the recent flood of resource development activities in Alberta may have a significant impact on our rivers. Government and non-government organizations, recreational clubs, businesses and individuals gave a variety of presentations on the market and non-market economic values of rivers, river management strategies, river conservation issues and multiple use philosophies.

Updates on all the major river basins in Alberta were an enjoyable and relaxing part of the program as they presented personalized views, most including a slide show. Cleve Wershler showed an outstanding slide show of the Milk River; Ben Gadd ended his presentation on the Maligne River with song and guitar; Wayne Norstrom related his close attachment to the Peace River; and Ken Larsen reviewed the Red Deer River and the history of the Dickson Dam.

One of the benefits of such conferences is listening to the perspectives of different people, and having an opportunity to hear about the experiences of representatives from other jurisdictions and their approaches to river management. Tim Palmer recounted the river conservation movement in the U.S. and the 50 years of lost battles (and lost heritage) that occurred before economic arguments, assessing the real costs of dams, were accepted by the government and resulted in changes to river management strategy. He suggested that public information is the foundation for change and that governments must be held accountable. Palmer also forecast that rivers will be the outstanding natural areas of the future and noted that Canada and Alberta are approximately 20 years behind the U.S.

Conference participants were divided into working groups on Friday afternoon to identify priority actions that would ensure the long term health of Alberta's rivers. Participants developed an abundance of recommendations. These included the following: participation in the Canadian Heritage Rivers Program; full and effective public participation in river and land use planning (a river is more than just water) and development approval processes; river and river basin management as opposed to water management; and full economic assessment of proposed developments including valuation of non-market values, a reworking of the environmental review process, establishing minimum in-stream flows to meet environmental needs, and increased emphasis on managing the demand side of the equation rather than solely targeting the supply side (i.e., institute conservation measures).

The participation of government, business, conservation and recreation organizations and individuals illustrated the concern and commitment towards ensuring that our rivers do, indeed, "Flow to the Future".

The proceedings from the conference will be available in December 1989.

The next conference will be hosted by the University of Alberta in 1991.

AN AMAZING WINGED MAMMAL

Somewhere in Texas is a nursery cave for 20 million Mexican free-tailed bats. That is a lot of bats! It translates into 243 t (240 T) of bats, or in places, 2 153 bats per m^2 (1 800 bats per sq. yd.). When they leave the cave at night to feed, they swirl out, circling to gain altitude. It takes over three hours for this living volcano of bats to emerge. Cruising at speeds up to 56 kmh (35 mph), they range up to 80 km (50 mi.) from the cave, flying an erratic pattern while chasing insects. They feed on 113 400 kg (250 000 lbs.) of insects every night. To drink, they swoop down to the surface of a pond, lapping at the water with their tiny pink tongues as they fly. They head home at dawn, diving in fast with wings half-folded, straight into the cave from heights of up to 4 km (2.5 mi.) above the earth.

Bats are truly amazing animals. They range in size from the bumblebee bat, weighing less than a penny (apparently the smallest mammal on earth), to flying foxes, with a 25-30 cm (10-12 in.) body and wingspans of nearly 2 m (6 ft.). Bats are mammals with wings that are stretched over four very long fingers and a thumb on each side. The leathery wing extends along the arm and the second and third fingers. The last two fingers act as struts. The thumb moves freely and is used to grip things like branches or to climb in arm-over-arm. A bat can scoop items up with its wings, wrap a wing around itself like a shawl, cradle its new pup in the wing, or use the wing to throw food into its mouth.

There are two main groups of bats. The smaller, insect-eating bats, like those found in Alberta, use echolocation to navigate and locate prey. They fly with their mouth open which allows them to call or whistle a high-frequency sound 20 or 30 times a minute. By listening for the sound to return, how long it takes and how loud it is, the bat can form a picture of the landscape and the objects within, as well as their distance and direction of movement. The large, fruit-eating bats, or flying foxes, have large eyes and do not echolocate. Recent, controversial studies from Australia suggest that rather than being "flying rodents", as some people consider bats, they may in fact be primates; that is, relatives of monkeys and apes.

Bats normally have only one pup per year. The mother often caches the newborn in a cradle formed by one wing. The pup has a powerful clinging instinct, holding fast to the mother to nurse. Initially, the mother keeps the pup with her at all times, even when flying. The insect-eating bats, which typically roost in caves, leave the pups in the cave as soon as possible. The pups are left in one area - the creche. When the mother returns, she flies to the creche, calling to her pup and the pup calls back. She seems to locate her pup easily among the sometimes thousands of others, and flies to it, scooping it up with a wing to let it nurse. Then she returns the pup to its place and flies to her usual perch.

Each bat has its own perch and leaves its pup in its own area. If the bats are startled and fly to another part of the cave, it is unknown if they can reassemble themselves in the right order. Disturbance of bats in caves has been a major cause for their decline. This is particularly harmful if bats are disturbed during hibernation, as the extra energy used when they are aroused may place enough stress on some to cause death. Anyone or anything that passes by a hibernating bat causes the bat to raise its body temperature in preparation for possible escape. This costs the bat anywhere from 10 to 30 days of stored fat reserve. The role that bats play in the ecosystem is not well understood. It is known, however, that in the tropics, for example, there are many species of plants, including some trees, that depend on bats to pollinate them. This includes avocados, bananas, dates, figs, guavas, breadfruit, peaches, mangoes, carob, cloves, cashews and tequila.

Although the disappearance of bats could gravely affect the economy of numerous countries, their value is not generally recognized. Major campaigns against bats have been waged in which colonies have been poisoned, attacked with flame throwers, dynamited or napalm-bombed from the air. Even in a place as "civilized" as Australia, they have "bat shoots", i.e., shooting bats in roosting areas until every bat is dead. This despite the fact that bats pollinate a host of economically important plants.

The slaughter of bats may not only prove economically disastrous but the repercussions on rain forests may be serious. Many trees depend on bats for pollination and seed dispersal. The disappearance of bats could result in progressive extinctions. For example, many species of eucalyptus, the leaves of which are eaten by koala bears, are pollinated by bats. The disappearance of bats could be followed by the loss of these trees and then, perhaps, by the koala.

Much of the fear and loathing attached to bats is related to misinformation. While part of the fear could be related to the possibility of catching diseases such as rabies, less than half of one per cent of bats contract rabies. Even when rabid, they rarely become aggressive. Only about 15 people in the United States and Canada are believed to have died of any bat-related disease in the past 40 years. More people have died annually from falling down stairs or of food poisoning at church picnics than have died in the past century from contact with bats.

Of the nine species of bats known to occur in Alberta, the little brown myotis (brown bat) is by far the commonest. They average 9 g (0.3 oz.) and have a wingspan of up to 20 cm (8 in.). In the summer, females roost in "nursery" colonies in buildings and hollow trees. They sleep during the day, then emerge at night to feed. An individual bat can catch 600 or more mosquitoes per hour. Little is known about where males or juveniles spend their summer. But in the fall, bats of all ages and both sexes rendezvous at caves in the mountains. The proposed Cadomin Cave Natural Area is one such swarming site. Each fall, "swarming" brings a large number of bats together to breed. Although some also hibernate in these caves, the sites where most of Alberta's little brown myotis hibernate are unknown.

Even less is known about the other species of bats found in Alberta. The big brown bat is probably the most common bat in southern Alberta, particularly in the Lethbridge and Medicine Hat areas. They look similar to the little brown bat, but weigh up to 23 g (0.8 oz.) and have a wingspan of up to 30 cm (12 in.). They roost in colonies in buildings - apparently preferring red brick buildings over 40 years old. Individuals may live up to 20 years.

The other species found in Alberta include the long-eared, the long-legged and the small-footed myotis and the silver-haired, red and hoary bats.

This information was adapted from an article by Diane Ackerman that was printed in the February 29, 1988, issue of The New Yorker.

INSERT A

CAN YOU FIND ALL THE LIVING THINGS?

This puzzle contains the names of some of the wild living things found in natural areas. Hyphens are omitted in the puzzle itself. The names can be spelled in any direction and some words are found inside others. There is a 15-letter secret plant or animal to be spelled from the leftover letters when you are done. The first person to send the correct secret word(s) into Natural Areas staff will receive a prize from us. We are looking forward to your letters and comments!

R L L U G D E L L I B G N I R
E E T N I M G O R F D O O W R
K I D F I R E W E E D D O E E
C R A N E O N E L K E B L A D
E A P S A W I R R A E B G R W
P L E R O M P H S T R L A E I
D U N L I N A S R A E C D H N
O F L A X N D L W R E N H C G
O I T S N D A L A O U U H T E
W E G P R O A W M S O T C I D
D G M O E M O O S E T H R W B
E D O T F R T L T C L A I O L
O E S E C H A F O X W T B D A
T S Q L H D I Y N D O C K F C
E D U G I R O Y K W A H U O K
E E I N V T L N H T N A O B B
R N T A E L I E E A X T O E I
H W O P S M E S R E T S A E R
T A N S Y R R E B W A R T S D

Hidden species (names to find in word puzzle)

PLANTS
Asters
Awned Sedge
Berry
Birch
Chives
Dock
Fern
Fir
Fireweed
Flax
Herb
Larch
Mint
Nut
Oat
Pine
Rose
Spangletop
Strawberry
Sundew
Tansy
Willow

MUSHROOMS
Morel

MAMMALS
Bat
Bear
Bobcat
Coyote
Cub
Deer
Doe
Elk
Fox
Kid
Lynx
Mink
Moose
Shrew
Wolf

AMPHIBIANS
Salamander
Toad
Wood Frog

INSECTS
Ant
Bees
Eggs
Mosquito
Moth
Wasp

ANNELIDS
Worm

BIRDS
Chat
Coot
Crane
Crow
Dowitcher
Dunlin
Eagle
Hawk
Knot
Loon
Loon
Nuthatch
Owl
Owl
Red-winged Blackbird
Ring-billed Gull
Sora
Swan
Three-toed Woodpecker
Towhee
Warbler
Wren

"TAKE A WALK ON THE WILD SIDE"

Promoting Wildlife Awareness

by

Fish and Wildlife Division
Alberta Forestry, Lands and Wildlife

Alberta's Fish and Wildlife Division, stewards of our province's wildlife resources, have **DONATED** a splendid series of buttons for Natural Areas' volunteer stewards. To find out how to receive these buttons and for more information about "Taking A Walk On The Wild Side", see the reverse side of this page.

INSERT B

DISCOVER ALBERTA'S WILD SIDE

Wildlife viewing, particularly the watching, feeding and photography of birds, is one of the fastest growing forms of outdoor recreation in North America, including Alberta. Public volunteer participation in organized wildlife surveys, such as Christmas Bird Counts and the Alberta Bird Atlas Project, is rapidly growing all over the province. As well, tourism agencies and local communities are now considering the activity as a tourist attraction.

There are, no doubt, several reasons for this surging interest in wildlife and wildlife viewing. A major factor is the need, by individuals living within an increasingly urbanized and technological society, to find renewed contact with elements of nature from which they are separated. Bird watching, flower identification and photography, and related activities are viewed as healthy and relaxing ways to spend leisure time away from the stresses of everyday work. Participation in bird counts, placement of nest boxes, and planting of trees and shrubs for wildlife also gives individuals a sense of fulfillment in caring for the natural environment.

In recognition of this increasing public interest and need, the Fish and Wildlife Division has recently expanded its programming efforts in the area of recreational wildlife viewing. It is working on several projects that will both enhance and better manage viewing in Alberta. Their work includes development of a wildlife viewing guide for the province that would identify some 75 prime wildlife viewing areas, including natural areas.

Special signing at and near each site will help the public find them and appreciate the wildlife species that occur there. The guide will include a wildlife viewing code of ethics to help ensure that viewing activities have minimal disturbance on the wildlife species and their habitats.

Have a rewarding wildlife viewing experience the next time you "Take a Walk On the Wild Side".

TO RECEIVE THE "TAKE A WALK ON THE WILD SIDE" BUTTONS

If you are a registered volunteer steward with the Natural Areas program AND have submitted a completed site inspection form for your site as of July 1, 1989 you will receive the "Caribou" button AUTOMATICALLY, by the end of August.

When you submit a completed site inspection form between July 1, 1989 and June 30, 1990 you will receive two different buttons. And when you submit a completed site inspection form the following year, you will receive the additional two buttons, thereby completing the set.

THANK YOU FOR THE BUTTONS, FISH AND WILDLIFE! - *Another cooperative project between Public Lands and Fish and Wildlife Divisions.*

NOW THAT I AM A STEWARD, WHAT DO I DO?

Planning Does Pay Off

Once you have been assigned a site and received the Volunteer Steward Kit, spend some time reviewing the information in it. Refer to the Natural Areas brochure and the legislation (Wilderness Areas, Ecological Reserves and Natural Areas Act: Section 12) to gain an understanding of what Natural Areas are. It will help you in answering questions and informing people that you may meet on site about the program. If you have any questions about Natural Areas after reading the material, please phone our office and talk to one of the staff.

For most sites, there is little in the way of biophysical information and disturbance maps. If your kit has either of these, then they can be used to help plan your first inspection of the site. These will detail the location of existing disturbances that should be field-checked and any special natural features that may require your attention. However, if such material is not in your kit, you will have to pay closer attention to the air photos and base maps.

A lot of useful information about the site can be obtained from airphotos and maps. These may be of different scales, so check the map legend and the border or, in the case of enlargements, the back of the air photo for the scale. You can use the scale ruler, which will be sent to you, to measure distances. If you are not used to interpreting air photos, take one with you and try to pick out features on it as you hike through the site. Shape, greyness and texture characteristics will provide clues to identify the object on the air photo. Features such as roads, cut lines, wetlands, shrublands, coniferous and deciduous woods, wellsites and eroded areas are usually quite easy to interpret from an air photo. If you have access to a stereoscope, you can take two sequential air photos and see features in 3-D.

If you are unfamiliar with the location of the site, locate it on the map and highlight your route to it. As most sites do not have signs posted, you will have to pay close attention to both the map and air photo to get to the right spot. If there is more than one access point, take different routes each time you visit the site to get an appreciation of the surrounding landscape.

If you have to cross private land to access your natural area, the landowner must be contacted prior to your visit to obtain permission. This also applies to any adjacent land held under grazing lease. These landowners may have interesting and useful information about the features on, and uses of, the site.

The air photo(s) can be used to plan your inspection tour. Pay close attention to trails, cut lines and disturbed areas that show up on the air photo. Depending on the size of the site, you may wish to block out sections for separate trips if you do not have time to complete the inspection in one day. A site that is a quarter section in size (65 ha/160 ac.) with a few trails or cut lines will take approximately two to four hours to inspect once on site. Of course, if you cannot drive right to the site, then the hiking time to it will have to be calculated. A guideline to use is a leisurely pace of 3-5 kmh (2-3 mph). Items to remember to take with you include the following: maps, air photos, pencils, notebook or clipboard, and paper. Depending on your interests, the following optional items may be included: camera and film, binoculars, field guides, proper footwear and clothing for the season and, of course, insect repellent if the pesky little critters are out. Small litter or garbage bags also come in handy in picking up the occasional piece of garbage.

On Site: The Inspection

When you arrive at the site, stay on the trails and cut lines, unless you are experienced with a map and compass. It is quite easy to get lost, even in a quarter section, if you wander far from recognized features. Most sites will not have any developed trails. If there is a cut line/fence line around the perimeter, it should be walked to locate random access points that may not have shown up on the air photo. If you come across a new trail, investigate it to see where it goes and why it was made (e.g., tree cutting, garbage dumping, recreation). Try to determine who is using the trail by looking for clues like width and condition of the trail, vehicle tracks (trikes, bikes, four-wheel drives), horse tracks and footprints. Flattened vegetation with no bare soil showing usually indicates a snowmobile trail.

Note the condition of any signs posted on the site and determine if they need to be replaced. With a grease pencil, mark on the air photo or map all signs of disturbance: trails, cut lines, fence lines, power lines, pipelines, camping/picnicking spots, fire pits/rings (record number), tree-cutting or bark-stripping, garbage dumping, evidence of grazing, all-terrain vehicle (ATV) use (tracks and eroded sandy areas and rutted trails), evidence of past fires, sand or gravel removal and structures (shacks, buildings). If anything requires immediate attention, please call the appropriate agency (RCMP, Alberta Public Lands, Alberta Fish and Wildlife, Alberta Forest Service).

Remember that you **DO NOT** have any enforcement authority. It is your responsibility to **OBSERVE, RECORD AND REPORT.**

Recording all this information may seem like an onerous task, but most natural areas will have little or no disturbance. If the area has been disturbed, with your help we can deal with it right away to lessen the impact and deter others from acting in an environmentally abusive manner.

Being a volunteer steward should also be enjoyable. Be sure to appreciate the natural features of the site. Any information that you can provide on wildlife, including animal sightings and signs and plant species, is most welcome. The long-term goal is to develop a plant and animal species list for each natural area.

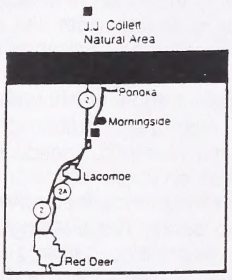
The Paperwork

Once back home, complete the inspection form and send it in to the Natural Areas office. Be sure to sign and date it. Include any recommendations for management of the site (e.g., signs, trail maintenance and access control structures). A copy of the completed inspection will be returned to you for your files. It is suggested that you insert it into your kit for future reference in planning additional trips. Your first trips to the site will require the greatest amount of time. Once you are familiar with the site, you will know what areas require the most attention on future trips. You are encouraged to visit and experience the site at different times of the year.

The Pay-off

We hope that you find being a volunteer steward is a rewarding experience, and we appreciate your valuable assistance in protecting these special places. With your help, we can ensure that they will be there for future generations to enjoy and appreciate.

J. J. COLLETT NATURAL AREA



Located near Morningside, the J. J. Collett Natural Area is made up of a pleasant, rolling landscape and a variety of plant communities. With its diversity of habitat, flora and wildlife, the area is an excellent site for outdoor research studies and educational activities.

Much of the J. J. Collett Natural Area is made up of rolling hills formed from glacial till. Winding through the area is a small stream, fed by wetlands and forming a small pond. On moist, shady hillsides, are small stands of white spruce. About a quarter of the site is made up of stabilized sand dunes.

Sand Dunes of Collett -- Bare, shifting sand is a difficult environment for plants and animals. There are few nutrients and water evaporates or drains away quickly. The surface is hot and any little breeze shifts the sand. As the sand shifts, roots may be uncovered and the blowing sand can act like sandpaper, tattering leaves. Plants have a rough time trying to grow on a sand dune!

But slowly, pioneering plants do become established. As they spread, they slow the wind down and provide shade for other species. Eventually, the plants stabilize the dune. But any loss of the vegetation cover and the dune begins to move again!

History -- Until the mid 1960s, this area was a privately owned logging and mill site. Remnants of the old building can still be seen. In 1974, the Provincial Government and the Alberta Wildlife Foundation jointly purchased the lands in trust to be used for environmental education. In 1976, the site was designated the J. J. Collett Natural Area in memory of John Joseph Collett, who was the son of the previous owner of the land. John was a Forestry Technology student devoted to the preservation of natural resources.

J. J. Collett Foundation, Volunteer Stewards -- J. J. Collett Natural Area has long been valued by local people for its natural features. In 1985, a group of interested individuals formed the J. J. Collett Foundation to ensure the preservation of the area's physical and ecological diversity while enhancing educational use of the area. In 1986, with the assistance of the Recreation, Parks and Wildlife Foundation, the J. J. Collett Foundation developed a parking area and upgraded the trail system in order to make the site more accessible to the public.

This dedicated group of individuals is providing a valuable service in continuing to manage and protect this site for Albertans.

Ground Squirrel *(Continued from Page 1)*

(18.6 mi.) west of Grande Prairie. This may be an interesting range extension as the former known range falls about 100 km (62 mi.) southwest of this new location. However, whether or not the species is native to the area is unknown.

An adult **tiger salamander** (Ambystoma tigrinum) was found beside the permanent slough located at the northwest corner of Sherwood Park Natural Area, 3 km (1.9 mi.) southeast of Sherwood Park. These creatures are apparently fairly common, but are rarely seen because of their habit of living in and around wet places and hiding under logs and other objects in damp areas.

When visiting your favourite Natural Area, check out the wet areas and let us know what you find. Record all strange and unusual sightings as some of them may truly be rare.

Conservancy Lease *(Continued from Page 1)*

Over the last few years, I conducted an extensive search of the area. The number of individual types of orchids I found there rose from two to seven, eventually reaching 15, including the rare bog adder's mouth (Malaxis paludosa), known in only a few other locations in Alberta. Realizing the importance of this, I contacted the Natural Areas people. It was decided that the landowner should be approached to see if he was willing to enter into a lease agreement to set aside the 8 ha (20 ac.) habitat. This would essentially mean that he would agree not to farm that portion of his land for a specified length of time. In the early summer of 1987, the landowner was contacted and asked if he would agree to participate in the conservancy lease. He was very interested. In the end, the Red Deer River Naturalists decided to lease the land from the farmer for an initial period of 10 years.

The lease was signed in September 1987. It is hoped that within 10 years, legislation will be enacted to protect rare plants.